

OPEN HOUSE MEETINGS SUMMARY

Habitat Conservation Planning on Washington's State-owned Aquatic Lands

Meetings were held at:

Pierce County Public Library —	August 28, 2006
Skagit Valley Community College —	August 30, 2006
Moses Lake Fire Department —	August 31, 2006

At each of the open house meetings, the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) presented a brief overview about the Aquatic Lands HCP. Participants were then invited to different 'information posts' to offer ideas about potential elements of the HCP and ask questions. The posters from the information posts can be found <http://www.dnr.wa.gov/htdocs/aqr/esa/index.html>. The four information posts included general information about state-owned aquatic land and a description of DNR's management authority and responsibilities, an overview of the Endangered Species Act and Habitat Conservation Planning, a description of species and habitats, and the activities and conservation measures proposed for DNR's habitat conservation plan. Approximately 40 – 45 people attended the three meetings.

If you would like to offer additional comments, or have additional questions, please email the ESA Team at aquaticsesa@wadnr.gov, call us at (360) 902-1100, or write to us at: ESA Team

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A summary of the comments and questions from the three meetings follows.

Scope and development of the aquatic lands HCP

- Is there a way to work with Services and look at "systems?"
- How will uses be arranged/regulated/authorized across landscapes? By habitat, species, limiting factors, etc.?
- Clarify that the HCP will cover *maintenance* of overwater structures, not construction.
- HCP will cover the effect of existing structures, not new construction covered by section 7.
- Note HCP impact on existing vs. new activities.
- How can DNR limit liability if permitting agencies allow activity?
- How will comments from the public be considered – will it make a difference?
- How site-specific will DNR's plan be?
- Does the HCP create a structure (i.e., a "mechanism") to review activities? DNR's responsibility is ongoing use, but minimize impact.
- Will activities the public does be mitigated? What are the ways DNR can authorize actions under the HCP?
- A person with dolphins on state land wanted clarification of the line between maintenance and operations; when would his interests be affected?

Other planning efforts and the aquatic lands HCP

- Coordinate with local planners.

- Coordinate with counties on SMA planning. Local planners welcome data.
- Need to know about local issues to make sure mitigation and other “fixes” are coordinated.
- Discuss the proliferation of recreational docks with local planners – start the conversation with questions rather than answers. Things on this scale are very important to local planners and may be too small a scale for DNR to pay close attention.
- County adoption/interaction with state HCP.
- Is it possible to scale the work DNR is doing to coordinate with local government planning for specific areas for environmental protection?
- A strategy will help other agencies – i.e., DOT can build toward statewide strategy.
- Clarify that other things covered by other agencies are not included in the HCP.

Environmental uses of state-owned aquatic lands

- Will DNR establish mitigation ratios?
- How are conservation measures tied to reserves? Where will reserves take precedence?
- How do small environmental non-profit advocacy groups protect their interests under the HCP? How do they continue working with DNR cost-effectively?
- DNR can’t “write off” an area even if there are not enough resources to manage everywhere. DNR can build partnerships to help manage these areas.

Information sharing

- Keep the HCP website updated.
- It is important to keep the interested public abreast of all developments, preliminary reports, etc. The more information earlier the better.

Activity-specific comments

- Limit boat anchoring around eelgrass beds, especially during big boating events.
- Do recreational docks provide more habitat than impact? How do you balance human wishes for water access with species needs?
- Take enforcement against unauthorized activities.
- DNR has no enforcement on boats moored beyond time limit or illegally, i.e., polluters/doing drugs. How will enforcement play out with an HCP?
- Small scale mining: human safety issues need to be considered.
- How does DNR interface with the US Army Corps of Engineers on mooring buoy permits? How does DNR decide how much land to encumber for an individual mooring buoy?
- It would be nice to have an expedited process for mooring buoys. Can DNR provide more?
- How does/will DNR deal with geoduck aquaculture on Bush/Callow lands?
- Discussion about intertidal geoduck cultivation.
- Questions about geoduck tract leasing.
- Olympia oyster species description doesn’t address impact of aquaculture on it.
- DNR should do an EIS to look at geoduck aquaculture.
- ESA impact on common activities, like whale-watching and fishing.
- What is the connection between orcas and DNR activities?
- There is evidence that escaped Atlantic salmon are breeding in BC. Glad to see that the HCP will include fin fish aquaculture.

- Please explain what DNR intends to include in “sand and gravel removal.” From flood control and navigation perspectives, it’s important to have as many tools as possible available. What is the line between gravel removal for flood control and for commercial mining?
- Biological assessments may already cover what DNR would look at under sand and gravel. Conversely, if DNR’s HCP streamlined permitting for flood-control oriented gravel removal, that would be really helpful.
- There are private property limitations to connecting floodplain and river.
- PUD dealing with milfoil – will the HCP deal with these issues?

Miscellaneous

- Small-scale miners discussed research on and habitat benefits of in-stream mining.
- Several people raised concerns about geoduck aquaculture.
 - Does geoduck aquaculture significantly impact fish habitat?
 - Can it be adequately mitigated for?
 - Aquaculture precluding other uses of lands
 - Aquaculture and pollution
- DNR will share data layers with interested planners.